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July 21, 2005

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.   
Director and Chief Medical Officer

SUBJECT: **DHS NURSING RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

At its March 5, 2002, meeting, the Board of Supervisors adopted a motion directing the Director of Health Services (DHS), in collaboration with the Director of Mental Health, the Sheriff, the Health Care Workforce Development Program, and Labor Management to report on issues related to nurse recruitment, retention, and training.

In addition, this is to also provide you with a bi-annual report on the DHS nursing recruitment and retention activities. Since both reports address similar issues, I am combining the two reports into one. This report covers the period December 20, 2004 – April 10, 2005.

**Tuition Reimbursement/Relocation Incentive Programs**

During the period December 20, 2004 – April 10, 2005, there were 20 graduates from the DHS Tutoring & Mentoring Program with the East Los Angeles College – School of Nursing.

As you are aware, in January 2003, the Department implemented a Tuition Reimbursement Program which provides financial assistance to permanent Registered Nurses (RN) attending advanced degree programs at accredited colleges. The reimbursement process had been historically administered through the DHS Human Resources Nurse Recruitment Office. However, effective September 2004, a revised Nursing Tuition Reimbursement policy allowed Nursing Administration at each facility and Public Health to administer the program directly. This process, now eight months old, has proven successful in expediting claims and payments to nursing personnel. DHS Human Resources Nurse Recruitment Office continues to process applications received from nurses in non-hospital and some Public Health settings (Health Services Administration and Office of Managed Care).

As you may recall, the Department re-established the Registered Nurse Relocation Incentive Program during Fiscal Year 2002-03, which provides financial assistance to RNs who come

to work for DHS for a minimum of one year and who, immediately prior to accepting County employment, maintained permanent legal residence at least 200 miles outside Los Angeles County. During this reporting period, there were no applications submitted for this program.

### **Training Programs To Upgrade Skills**

Additional nursing training opportunities have been developed and implemented through the Health Care Workforce Development Program (HCWDP), an educational partnership between DHS and the Service Employees International Union, Local 660. The HCWDP established a joint Nurse Education Project Team, with the participation of nurse managers, along with staff Registered Nurses (RN) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN) representing the hospital clusters.

Listed below are the major highlights during the period December 20, 2004 – April 10, 2005:

- Eleven employees who graduated from nursing school passed the State's NCLEX-RN exam for licensure and are now registered nurses.
- Six employees who graduated from nursing school passed the State's NCLEX-LVN exam for licensure and are now licensed vocational nurses.
- Twenty-two employees continued their Registered Nurse training program at El Camino Community College. The training is scheduled to conclude in May 2005.
- In February 2005, a new generic Registered Nurse training program was started at El Camino Community College, with a total of 33 students enrolled.
- In March 2005, a new 14-month LVN-to-RN training program was started at East Los Angeles Community College, with a total of 35 students enrolled.
- Seven of the ten Licensed Vocational Nurses who completed their LVN-to-RN training program at East Los Angeles Community College in July 2004, have taken the State exam for RN licensure. Five of the employees passed and the other two will re-take the exam soon. The other three graduating students are pending completion of additional school requirements before taking the RN licensure exam.
- Four of the five employees who completed their Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) training at St. Francis Career College passed the State exam for LVN licensure.
- Five of the ten students who graduated from the LVN-to-RN training program at East Los Angeles Community College passed the State exam for RN licensure. The other five are in various stages of preparation for the State exam.
- A combined total of 25 employees continue with their training to become Licensed Vocational Nurses. Fourteen are training at LAC+USC's School of Nursing and Allied Health and eleven at Olive View/UCLA Medical Center. The training is scheduled to conclude in September 2005.

- Twenty LVNs completed separate four-day courses and received a certificate on Intravenous Infusion (IV) Therapy.
- Eight nurses completed a two-day course designed for nurses who work in clinical settings caring for newborn and neonatal patients.
- Six nurses, who provide care to the adult patient population, completed a three-day Adult Physical Assessment course on the application of clinical techniques and the use of instrumentation.

### **Tutoring And Mentoring Program – East Los Angeles Community College (ELAC) School Of Nursing**

As you may recall, the DHS Tutoring/Mentoring Program is designed to improve study skills and enhance the overall learning process so that ELAC nursing students may pass the State Board licensure examination to become registered nurses. The DHS Nurse Recruiters and ELAC nursing staff continue to encourage nursing student graduates to apply for the full time Staff Nurse and Clinic Nurse I positions within the County of Los Angeles health facilities. ELAC graduates seeking part-time employment for personal or educational reasons are encouraged to apply for Relief Nurse positions. During this reporting period, DHS began taking steps to renew the two-year contract with the college. All terms of the contract will remain the same.

#### **Tutoring and Mentoring Activities:**

Clinicals: The Program at ELAC's School of Nursing conducted 15 weekend clinical rotations at LAC+USC Medical Center during the period December 20 – April 10, 2005. These clinical rotations continue to strengthen the student's clinical skills in small groups within the County hospital setting and provide the students with one-on-one instructor assistance, mini-lectures, and Support Assistance; ELAC's faculty tutors continued to provide mini-lectures in medical, surgical, mental health, and other courses outlined in ELAC's nursing course modules. The rotations included support assistance workshops on such nursing survival skills as assertiveness, communication, advocacy, and building self-esteem.

The mini-lectures and workshop topics included pharmacology, medication dosage calculation, neurology, physiology, cardiovascular, electrolyte imbalances, nursing process, anxiety, and personality disorders. ELAC conducted 77 mini-lectures and nursing workshops with an average attendance of 12 nursing students per class.

Below are two charts related to the ELAC nursing students who participated in the DHS program. The first chart provides the number of students enrolled during the period December 20, 2004 – April 10, 2005; the second chart shows first time NCLEX-RN pass rates by quarter, as it was reported by the California Board of Registered Nurses. Regarding the second chart, reporting the information in this manner allows for comparison of pass rates for this population of students from previous quarters. As reflected in the chart, the June (2004) pass rate was the highest documented NCLEX-RN rate received from ELAC students to date. However, the most recent results, December (2004), reflect a dip in the pass rate to a low of 60%. ELAC's Nursing Department has convened to discuss the score and recommendations for improving the scores are forthcoming.

DHS – ELAC ENROLLMENT	
QUARTER (Dates)	NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN QUARTER
Winter Intersession, Spring, 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter (December 20, 2004 – April 10, 2005.	169

QUARTER (2004)	NUMBER OF ELAC STUDENTS TAKING NCLEX-RN	FIRST TIME % PASS RATE
March	26	96.15
June	03	100.00
September	24	79.17
December	20	60.00

DHS ELAC Recruitment Activities/Events:

- 02/03/05 – DHS spoke to ELAC LVN to RN students at Workforce Development Headquarters. Provided encouragement and information regarding job placement.
- 02/07/05 – ELAC Nursing Program Fall Semester Kick-Off with DHS Presentation.
- 02/15/05 – ELAC Recruitment and Retention Table for all nursing students at LAC+USC Medical Center.
- 02/26/05 – ELAC Alumni Association Recruitment Event.
- 03/01/05 – ELAC Recruitment and Retention Table for all nursing students at LAC+USC Medical Center.
- 03/15/05 - ELAC Recruitment and Retention Table for all nursing students at LAC+USC Medical Center.
- 04/11/05 – ELAC Nursing Program 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Kick-Off with DHS Presentation.

During this reporting period, 6 applications were received from ELAC students listing the following DHS exam titles: Clinic Nurse I (1), Staff Nurse (3), and Relief Nurse (2).

### **Joint Nursing Shortage Committee**

The DHS Recruitment and Examining Office's Nurse Recruiter's meeting serves as the forum for discussing and planning nurse recruitment and retention activities within the Department. The September 23, 2004 meeting marked the beginning of regular meeting attendance by nurse recruitment representatives from the Departments of Mental Health and Sheriff's at this committee. Although attendance by the Department of Mental Health nurse representative has fluctuated, a standing invitation remains for their department.

This committee continues to collaborate on issues and activities that influenced the recruitment and retention of DHS nurses. DHS recently provided information to committee members about the National Association for Health Care Recruitment's 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference in San Diego. As a result, seven (7) LACO Nurse Recruiters will attend the informational event to gain added skills to recruit and retain nurses within our department.

### **Availability Of Federal And State Funds That May Be Utilized To Enhance The County's Nurse Training, Recruitment, And Retention Efforts**

The State has committed approximately \$3.0 million in additional Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds from the Governor's discretionary fund for the Health Care Workforce Development Program. These funds were approved in April 2005 for County training purposes through the end of December 2005. A significant portion of these funds will be utilized for nursing careers training and upgrading nursing skills. Efforts are underway to seek additional State training funds for the remainder of FY 05-06.

### **Retraining Programs For Non-Nursing Employees Interested In Becoming Nurses**

During the reporting period, the Health Care Workforce Development Program provided the following training activities for non-nursing employees interested in becoming nurses:

- Seventy employees, who have indicated an interest in a nursing career, attended an 18-hours RN study skills preparatory course focusing on reading, writing, time management, and medical calculations.
- Fifty-eight employees attended LVN Assessment Workshops and were given a Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess their qualifications to enter a LVN training program administered by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).
- Twenty-seven employees were enrolled into a physiology class at Valley Community College. Physiology is one of several science pre-requisite courses required of all incoming RN students.

### **Nurse Faculty Grant Program To Enhance Nursing School Recruitment Efforts**

The Health Care Workforce Development Program will be funding a nurse clinical instructor course during Summer 2005 to prepare qualified and interested DHS registered nurses. These new clinical instructors will expand the capacity of the Los Angeles County School of Nursing to train new registered nurses in County facilities.

**Preparing Employed Nursing Students For The NCLEX For Registered Nurses**

No new activity during the reporting period.

The Department will continue to provide you future reports on a bi-annual basis. In the meantime, if you have any questions or require additional information, please let me know.

TLG:mf:ad  
203:018s

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
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